

July 6. 2017

I am very sad to learn of the passing of [John Travis](#), a very important person for the Philly music scene. John was co-owner of JC Dobbs, which for the last part of the '70s, all of the '80s and until the mid-'90s was THE music bar and the musicians hangout. I discovered Dobbs one late winter night in '77. I'd gone to the movies with my now-gone buddy Steve Brown and we didn't feel like ending the night. So we went down to South Street and went into this divey bar at the end of the block. There was a little trio playing to maybe 10 people. This was at the height of disco and wimpy singer-songwriters and this little trio was playing blues and real rock and roll. They didn't have a bass player, but some guy named "Roadblock" playing bass notes on a guitar. They turned out to be George Thorogood and The Destroyers and a month or two later, their first album would be released on Rounder. I invited them to come play live on my all night radio show, which they did, and that began my relationship with John and JC Dobbs. Slowly but surely Dobbs started having more and more music. First it was one band a night, then two, and much later on three and more. By the end of the decade he started bringing in Chicago Blues artists, which marked a change, but it was mostly local musicians, his friends from North Jersey, The Blue Sparks From Hell, and then a band from Lancaster, PA, The Speed Boys who would bring their own upright console piano! John ended up presenting every kind of music and he would give everyone a chance. You just had to be able to play. He genuinely loved music and it didn't matter if you were punk, funk, country, swing, or a singer-songwriter. Somewhere around the mid-'80s, John left and Kathy James took over and the list of musicians who played their first Philly gig at Dobbs is long, but includes Nirvana, Steve Earle, Dwight Yoakam, Lucinda Williams and many others. But John started it. It was his vision.